



# THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival  
of Religion in *England* *Scotland* and *America*.

To be publish'd Weekly.

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WE go on with our Intelligences just arrived from Scotland--And, at the Desire of some of our Readers, here insert the following Preface, to the first Edinburgh Edition of Mr. Edwards's Sermon on the Trial of the Spirit, by the Rev. Mr. Willison, one of the most eminent Ministers in Scotland.

## P R E F A C E to the S C O T S R E A D E R.

WE in this Church and Land may acknowledge with deep Regret (as may other Churches also) that it hath been a dead, barren and backsliding Time with us for many Years past; the Work of Conviction and Conversion hath been rare, the Golden Showers of the Spirit have been restrained, the Pangs of the New Birth little experienced, and few Sons and Daughters born to God, in respect of former Times. Mean while, Infidelity, Error, Lukewarmness, Carnality and Profanity have been on the growing Hand; so that we had Cause to fear God was about to remove our Candlestick out of its Place, or come against us with some desolating Judgment.

In such a desperate like Case, it is amazing to think that God should go to work quite another Way, and glorify his sovereign Mercy and Grace, in pitying his forlorn People, and causing his Spirit lift up a Standard against the Enemy when coming in as an overflowing Flood, while in Justice he might have given us for a Prey: Surely *God's Thoughts are not as our Thoughts*

*Thoughts, nor his Ways as ours ; but as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are his Ways and Thoughts higher than ours.* When God comes to build up Zion, and display his Glory therein, he acts still in a Way surprising and peculiar to himself, and will not be confined to our Times, Ways, and Instruments of working ; his Goings are free, sovereign, and awful, to teach all to adore his Majesty and Sovereignty, and beware of limiting the holy One of *Israel*.

When God turned again the Captivity of Zion, their Surprise was so great, they were like Men in a Dream, and could hardly believe the Reality of it : For the Mercy came at the very Time they were provoking God, and causing his holy Name to be profaned among the Heathen, *Ezek. xxxvi.* yet then, he faith, *I'll sanctify my Name before the Heathen, by pitying my People, gathering them to their own Land, and sprinkling them with clean Water, &c.* A strange Way to retrieve his Honour, and resent Indignities ! But this he doth out of his sovereign Goodness and Mercy, and for Reasons within himself, *Ezek. xxxvi. 22.* *Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your Sakes, O House of Israel, but for my holy Name's Sake.* And God knows best how to glorify his own Name : One Design in it toward his People he expresseth, *Ezek. xvi. 63.* *That thou mayst remember and be confounded, and never open thy Mouth any more because of thy Shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.*

When some alledge, God will not be pacified, nor return to us, till we thorowly reform ourselves ; it is to say, We must first chuse him before he chuse us ; which is impossible, and contrary to the Method of God's preventing free Grace : For still God pities and turns to us, before we really and unfeignedly turn to him. He must pour out his Spirit to cause us *mourn and reform*, before we can do either : And this he doth, not for our Sake, but for his own Name's Sake.

How astonishing are the Dispensations of a provoked holy God in our Day ! That, in midst of Backslidings and Provocations from his Churches, he should *come suddenly into his Temple*, by a glorious Ministrations of his Spirit with the Word ; first in *America*, through the *British Colonies* there ; then in *Britain* itself, and particularly in several Parts of the *West of Scotland* ; whereby many are awakned and converted from Sin to God. But, tho' the Lord comes thus with his surprising Goodness and Mercy, it is to be regreted, that many of his People

People are so far from meeting him with Praises, that they continue still dreaming, and questioning if it be the real Work of God ; nay, inclining to ascribe it to other Causes : Yet, I hope, all true Lovers of Jesus, tho' some for a Time may be prejudiced thro' Party-Zeal or Misinformation, will at length own that Work to be the Work of God, which produceth the Fruits of the Spirit in the Lives of those that are awakned and convinced by the Word.

I acknowledge all are bound to try the Spirits, and guard against Delusions, seeing *Satan* may transform himself into an Angel of Light. I grant, sometimes he may do so, to promote Errors striking at the Vitals of Religion : But did he ever transform himself to promote Truth and Godliness ? Did ever the Devil devise a Delusion, or carry on a Design, to turn People from all Error and Vice, to all Truth and Holiness ? From relying on Self-righteousness, to rest wholly on Christ and his imputed Righteousness for Justification ? From the Love of the World and of Sin, to the Love of Christ, and Desires of Conformity to him, in Holiness, Meekness and Lowliness of Heart ? From all false Rules, to make the Bible the only Rule of their Faith and Practice ? and at the same Time they study to exalt free Grace in the whole of their Salvation, to aim in Christ's Strength at universal Holiness, and the Practice of good Works, according to both the first and second Table of the Law ? Was the Devil ever the Author of such a Work as this ? They who can believe this, may as well believe that the Devil is turned Christian, and is pulling down his own Kingdom to build up Christ's on the Ruins of it.

The attested Narrative of the extraordinary Work at *Cambray* has given Account of such wonderful Changes wrought upon great Numbers by the Gospel there, as afford lasting Matter of Praise to all the Well-wishers of Christ's Kingdom ; and the more, that we still hear of the Continuance and Increase of that glorious Work. Blessed be God, that the little Cloud there, which a few Months ago was but like a Man's Hand, is now grown so big, as to spread and water many Parishes in the Neighbourhood, and some at a good Distance. This gives a loud Call to all through the Land, to observe and regard the Works of the Lord, and to put in for a Share, and to go forth to meet the heavenly Shower with empty Vessels and dry Fleeces spread out, and also with the high Praises of God in our Mouths for what he is doing for others : Nay, there is just now, me-

thinks, the Sound of Abundance of Rain ; and, if we could believe and pray more, we might hope the blessed Work now begun would spread, till it even go through the Breadth and Length of the Land. Blessed be God, that has not quite forgot poor *Scotland* his ancient covenanted Land, notwithstanding all the Evils and Abominations done in the midst of us. Well may that Word be applied to us, *Jer. li. 5. For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of Hosts ; though their Land was filled with Sin against the holy One of Israel.* O what are these Mountains and Difficulties which sovereign Grace cannot overcome ! This sovereign Lord seems to be saying of us, as he did of *Judah*, after he had seen his treacherous Dealing, and his going on frowardly in the Way of his Heart, even under God's providential Checks and Dispensations to reclaim him, *I have seen his Ways, and will heal him, Isa. lvii. 17, 18.* O, will not such astonishing *Riches of Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering*, melt our Hearts, and lead us to *Repentance* !

The ensuing Treatise, by the Reverend Mr. *Edwards* at *Northampton* in *New-England*, concerning the Work and Operations of the Holy Spirit upon Men's Consciences, is, in my humble Opinion, a most excellent, solid, judicious, and scriptural Performance, which, I hope, thro' the Divine Blessing, will prove most useful to the Church, for discerning a true and real Work of the Spirit of God, and for guarding against Delusions and Mistakes. It is certainly a great Mercy to the Church, that this Subject hath been undertaken and handled by such an experienced well-furnish'd Scribe, that hath been long acquainted with the Spirit of God's Dealings with the Souls of Men in his own Congregation and Country where he lives. And seeing the extraordinary Work there at present (tho' several Thousands of Miles distant from *Scotland*) is of the same Kind with that at *Cambuslang*, and other Places about, and meets with much the same Opposition ; the Author doth, with great Judgment, answer the common Objections which are made against the Work both there and here, so that scarce any Thing further needs be added. He warns People very warmly against opposing or reproaching the Work of the Holy Spirit. He being the third Person of the glorious Trinity, and God equal with the Father and the Son, and the great Applier of the Redemption purchased for us ; it becomes all Men highly to honour him and his Work, and to look upon it as highly dangerous

dangerous to speak a Word against him, according to *Mat.* xii. 32. I do not doubt but some well-inclined Persons may be in hazard of neglecting that awful Caution too much, in Time of hot Division of Parties, and of the abounding Cavils of *Deists* and Enemies of the Work of the Holy Spirit. Wherefore it is most seasonable and necessary that they should read and peruse this Treatise at this Time, that they may be directed how to pay a suitable Regard to the Works of the Lord, and Operations of his Hands, which seem to be so singular and uncommon in his Churches at this Day both abroad and at home ; and particularly, that they may avoid that very alarming Threatning, *Psal. xxviii. 5. Because they regard not the Works of the Lord, and the Operations of his Hand, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.*

Seeing that worthy Man, Mr. *Cooper of Boston*, who writes a noble Preface to Mr. *Edwards's* Treatise, and who knows the Author better than I, doth in it give him and his Performance their due Character, I shall add no more but my fervent Prayers to God, to bless both him and it ; and that he would pour out his Spirit yet more abundantly both upon *America* and all the *British* Dominions ; and that he would hasten the Glory of the latter Days, when the *Jews shall be brought in with the Fulness of the Gentiles, and that all the Kingdoms of the World may become the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, that he may reign for ever and ever.* Amen and Amen.

*Dundee, June 23.*

1742.

Jo. WILLISON.

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. *Alexander Webster* and *Wm. Guthart* to the Rev. Dr. *Colman*.

*Edinburgb, Jan. 29. 1742,3.*

R. D. B.

‘ **T**HO’ not personally acquainted, your Character is well known to us : which makes us presume to join with our worthy Friend the Rev. Mr. *Willison*, Minister of *Dundee*, in transmitting to you some well attested Accounts of the late glorious Appearances God hath made in our Sanctuary. The Resemblance which this Work has to what was of late Years in *New-England* is most remarkable. It’s scarce possible to say by what innumerable Tricks and Artifices it has been opposed. But blessed be GOD, it triumphs over all Opposition.’

Extract

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Mr. *Willison* of *Dundee* to  
the Rev. Dr. *Colman*.

‘ *Dundee*, Feb. 28. 1742, 3.

‘ Very Rev<sup>d</sup>. and much Hon<sup>d</sup>.

‘ — I Am glad to know by yours of *May 27.* that the good  
‘ Work with you is not ceased, and that your Ministry  
‘ and that of your Brethren is still attended with remarkable  
‘ Succes; notwithstanding some Things discouraging go-  
‘ ing alongst.

‘ I must inform you a little of the Work of God be-  
‘ gun here. I told you in my last, that after the Rev. Mr.  
‘ *Whitefield*’s first coming and preaching three Months in  
‘ *Scotland*, there were some Beginnings of a Revival of Reli-  
‘ gion in some of our principal Cities, as *Edinburgh* and *Glas-*  
‘ *gow*, which still continue and increase, especially since Mr.  
‘ *Whitefield*’s second Coming in *June* last. But besides these  
‘ Cities, the Lord hath been pleased to begin a Work much  
‘ like that in *New-England*, in several Places in the West of  
‘ *Scotland*. The first Parish awakened was *Cambuslang*; the  
‘ next was the Parish of *Kilsyth*, about nine Miles North-east  
‘ from *Glasgow*; and afterward the Parishes *Calder*, *Kirkin-*  
‘ *tilloch*, *Cumbernauld*, *Campsie*, *Killmarnock*, *Gargunnock*, and a  
‘ great many others in the Country. The Awakenings of  
‘ People have been in a good many attended with Outcryings,  
‘ Faintings and bodily Distresses, but in many more the Work  
‘ has proceeded with more Calmness. But the Effects in  
‘ both Sorts are alike good and desirable, and hitherto we hear  
‘ nothing of their falling back from what they have professed  
‘ at the Beginning: and still we hear of some new Parishes  
‘ falling under great Concern here and there, tho’ the great  
‘ Cryings and outward Distresses are much ceased.

— ‘ The Lord in this backsliding Time is willing to pity  
‘ us, and see our Ways and heal them, however crooked and  
‘ perverse they have been. Oh! shall not this wonderful  
‘ Step of divine Condescension lead us all to Repentance,  
‘ and to go out to meet a returning GOD in the Way of  
‘ Humiliation and Reformation. The Magistrates and Mi-  
‘ nisters of *Edinburgh* are beginning to set up Societies for  
‘ Reformation of Manners, and new Lectures on Week Days.  
‘ May all our Cities follow their Example. There is a great  
‘ Increase of praying Societies also in *Edinburgh* and other  
‘ Towns and Villages, and in them they are keeping Days

‘ of

‘ of ‘Thanksgiving for the partial Waterings the L O R D is  
 ‘ giving us. Those in EDINBURG send *printed Memorials*  
 ‘ to others thro’ the Nation to excite them to it. I have sent  
 ‘ one of them herewith. May the Lord accept their *Thanks-*  
 ‘ *givings*, and hear their Prayers.

The above Memorial referred to, is as follows *viz.*

### M E M O R I A L.

*Edinbr. January 21st, 1743.*

‘ **S**OME Christian Societies in this Place who have of late ob-  
 ‘ served, with no small spiritual Joy, the Outpourings of the  
 ‘ Spirit from on High on several Corners of this wither’d Church,  
 ‘ think it a Duty incumbent on all that love our Lord Jesus  
 ‘ in Sincerity and Truth, and who long for the Coming of  
 ‘ his Kingdom, to set a Day apart for praising and giving Thanks  
 ‘ to his Name, for any remarkable Waterings he has given to  
 ‘ some Spots of his Vineyard; and to pray that these may only be  
 ‘ the Fore-runners of a plentiful Shower, to refresh the Whole.

‘ That he would carry on this good and unexpected Work  
 ‘ with such Power and Demonstration of the Spirit, that all  
 ‘ Opposers, whether professed Enemies to his Kingdom, or  
 ‘ mistaken Friends, may be at last obliged to own that it is  
 ‘ *the Doing of the Lord, and wonderful in their Eyes.*

‘ The Day proposed for this agreeable Duty is the 18th of  
 ‘ *February* next.

‘ But if that Day does not suit with the Conveniency of  
 ‘ any of the Societies, or private Christians, that desire to keep  
 ‘ such a Day, they may chuse another more convenient for  
 ‘ them.

**W**E now proceed to give the Reader a Continuation  
 of Mr. Robe’s Narrative, lately arrived. And having  
 finished the three first Articles in our 7th Number, We go  
 on to the

### IV ARTICLE.

*Concerning those who have been awaken’d and appear now to be  
 converted in a silent unobserved Manner.*

**H**E observes under this Head, That — some have express’d  
 great Dissatisfaction with the Work, that the Awaken’d  
 didn’t conceal their Distress, at least from the Pyblick; and  
 have declar’d they should be pleased with Instances of a Work  
 of Conviction carried on in a calm and quiet Manner. In all  
 which they have the Satisfaction they demand; and at the same  
 Time so extraordinary an Out-pouring of the Spirit, as that the  
 Instances

Instances are more numerous for these *six Months* past than there has been for *as many Years* before, as far as he can judge ; and these Instances of Conversion more unquestionable. That — the Convictions, Distresses and Exercises of these, have been of the same Kind with those, whose Distresses have been openly manifested, and their Experiences, as to an Escape by Grace much alike.

He then proceeds to give Instances of this Sort. The first of which we shall here insert, and so pass on.

*C. D.* " Came first under Convictions which made him uneasy, upon the first *Sabbath of March* last, by hearing the Work of Regeneration preach'd, as it is the writing of God's Law upon the Sinner's Heart, from *Heb. viii. 10.* He was made to see that it was not as yet written upon his Heart, and the absolute Necessity of having it. At Night his Landlady and he discoursed of God's raising the Dead at the last Day, and the general Judgment then to be. The Consideration of these, and of the dreadful sad Estate which the Wicked shall be in, made further deep Impressions upon him. He says, That he found every Sermon he heard make these Impressions deeper ; and that he was much displeased with himself ; that his Concern and Anxiety about his spiritual and eternal State was not greater. Upon the last *Sabbath of April* his Convictions, & thereby his Distress came to a great Height, from his hearing of a Woman who was that Day awakened, and brought to my House in great Distress.

" He told me that he could apply to himself, the most Part of a Sermon, he heard from me upon the 19th of *May* last ; concerning the Spirit's convincing the World of Sin ; such as that he usually begins with one Sin, and carrieth it on to a Conviction of particular Sins : which, he says, He could name particularly before the Lord : And that further, he was convinced of Bosom Sins, and of the evil Nature of Sin ; and that he was not so much affrighted with the Terror of Hell, as he was afflicted for offending a holy God : And that further he got such a Sight of the Filthiness of Sin, as to loath himself because of it. That he was also convinced of the Evil of Unbelief, of the first Motions of Sin, and the Sinfulness of them tho' not consented to ; of Self-conceit, a Sense of the Evil of which, stuck as long with him as any Thing else, as he terms it.

(To be continued.)